.BA
.7
v

BOSTON PUBLIC LIBRARY

PROGRESS REPORT - R-42

FEBRUARY 16, 1962

Chas
.5R. Pro

CHARLESTOWN PROGRESS NARRATIVE

Property of
BOSTON REDEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY
Library

Charlestown is a unique district in Boston in as much as it is physically separated from the remainder of the city by natural boundaries of water and topography. The periphery of the Charlestown district has been devoted to industrial and transportation uses which have isolated and insulated the hard core of this district. This hard core is now and always has been built up in residential uses. Charlestown was settled before Boston and it was from Charlestown that Boston was settled by the founding fathers of the Massachusetts Bay Company in the summer of 1629.

In November of 1960 in accord with the major recommendations of the Boston Development Program, both GNRP and Survey and Planning Applications were submitted to the Regional Office.

By agreement between the Authority and HHFA, the Charlestown Survey and Planning Application was subsequently withdrawn and returned because federal grant requirements for the project could not be earmarked at that time. At the same time, it was agreed that the authority would resubmit its initial Survey and Planning Application for this area as soon as federal grant funds became available. With the passage of the 1961 Housing Act those funds became available and we resubmitted the Charlestown Survey and Planning Application in early part of July, 1961.

The preparation of the GNRP Plan has been going on since November of 1960. Early in these studies it became apparent that to develop a first project as it was conceived in the GNRP Application would be extremely impractical, for the following reasons:

1. Satisfactory solutions of the regional transportation problems cannot be arrived at unless the abutting community is planned and developed to contain them.

The geographic location of the Charlestown GNRP focused immediate attention on the regional flow of traffic in and around the Charlestown area. The seriousness of these transportation questions called for a bold solution. The important facts were as follows:

Roughly 200,000 plus automobile trips per day must find their way through or around the Charlestown GNRP.

The provision of space for the location of new transportation facilities to carry the projected traffic load had to be made on a coordinated basis that would recognize the needs of the city of Cambridge, the city of Somerville, the Massachusetts Port Authority, the M.T.A., the Boston and Maine Railway, the MDC, and the residential community in Charlestown.

2. The Charlestown residential community is compact and interrelated to such an extent that it must be rehabilitated as a unit.

3. The problems of providing the necessary new housing stock and the supporting community facilities for a compact community with a minimum of hardship for its residents demands that it be done in a single project.

4. Charlestown is isolated from the rest of Boston and this community needs comprehensive treatment if it is to survive.

With these regional forces being brought to bear upon the Charlestown GNRP the Boston Redevelopment Authority entered into a coordinated effort with the other agencies involved to undertake a comprehensive study of this North Terminal Area.

During this same period the Boston Redevelopment Authority has been engaged in other studies of Charlestown in order that a GNRP Plan and a first project could be outlined. These studies have made it clear that Charlestown offers an excellent opportunity to do a successful first project. However, it is equally clear that this first project must encompass the entire residential area if it is to be successful. This will require a larger capital grant reservation than was asked for under the origional application.

The preparation of the GNRP Plan is almost complete. We have encumbered 70% of the GNRP budget. However, the remaining 30% should be sufficient to close out the GNRP.

With these funds we have produced a draft GNRP Plan which calls for a first project slightly larger than that estimated in our submitted Survey and Planning Application. This plan is based upon a series of objectives that are as follows:

Planning Objectives for Charlestown:

1) The community is situated in a highly strategic location in the metropolitan area and has been unable to effectively compete for land and forestall further and further encroachments of commercial activities or regional transportation facilities.

   The plan proposes to overcome this by expanding the residential community. Charlestown's population has declined steadily since 1910 with the most severe decline oocurring in the last decade. This decline is symptomatic of many problems within the Charlestown, but its character has an extremely erosive effect in terms of the community's future. The young families of Charlestown, who represent the vitality and political, social and economic strength of the community, have been abandoning it.

   A fundamental objective of the plan statement is to provide the community with an outward orientation' designed to attract such families. Thus the plan proposes to expand the residential community to provide more attractive residential opportunities those people still remaining. Through the accomplishment of this objective Charlestown can more fully take advantage of its unusual location and be provided with long-term strength through a broader, more diversified population.

2) As a derivative of the first objective, the plan seeks to establish additional gateways or entrances to the community as well as to materially enhance those already existing. In spite of a tremendous scale of regional transportation facilities, community itself has few good connections to surrounding areas. It is isolated not only from residential communities in Boston, but also in Everett,

Somerville, and Cambridge.

3) Charlestown's original development was substantially enhanced by its ties to the sea. Today, with land filling and port and industrial development, these ties are virtually lost to the residential community. What is potentially the community's most important amenity is almost totally hidden from view and physically inaccessible. One key objective of the plan is to re-establish the ties to the waterfront and to refocus on the water as a desirable design element.

4) Charlestown is rich in history and historic personages. A major objective of the plan is to restore those elements of an historic character and to provide stronger links between them, and to the historic elements of the city in general.

5) Circulation proposals suggest that Charlestown will be further affected by major circulation proposals for the region. Developing from these proposals will be some of the most important crossroads of the metropolitan area. One objective of the plan statement is to fully recognize the potential of these crossroads while in no way adversely affecting the residential community. Indeed, such potential may well express itself in new residential development.

6) As well as planning objectives, the plan statement reflects renewal treatment objectives. There is inherent attractiveness and value in the existing Charlestown residential structures lying on the slopes of the hills and the hilltops. A maximum degree of conservation activity is proposed for these areas with clearance utilized only to remove those structures in worst condition or those needed to realize other plan objectives. The flat lands on the perimeter of Charlestown have almost been abandoned for residential use and are in an advanced stage of deterioration. These areas most strategically located with respect to regional circulation proposals are thus strategic clearance areas.

Proposals to Achieve Plan Objectives

While the preliminary sketch plan has derived substantial guidance from previous planning effort, especially at the regional scale, the specific form of the plan is quite different in many ways. With the Inner Belt and Central Artery framework providing the dominant and most pervasive elements of the plan, the scheme relies heavily on providing a means of relating the existing community to these elements in such a way as to fully realize the stated objectives. Thus it can

be seen that the major concentration of renewal action lies between Main Street and the proposed Inner Belt; and between Sullivan Square and City Square.

A most critical proposal is that a parallel service road to the Inner Belt be created utilizing the present alignment of Rutherford Avenue extended to Front Street and City Square. This provides the opportunity to accomplish a number of objectives.

1) Prison Point bridge and the surrounding land can be greatly enhanced and developed as a gateway to the Charlestown community which becomes a major anchor point in restructuring the residential community.

2) Significant residential development opportunities are created in conjunction with this gateway and its surrounding facilities.

3) Rutherford Avenue becomes a clear line of demarcation between the industrial areas to the south and the residential area to the north.

4) Existing and new industrial development could be more oriented towards the Inner Belt and Front Street in terms of its traffic generation character, thereby further effectuating a division between the industrial and residential areas, and discouraging further encroachment into residential areas.

Another major proposal is the removal of the present MTA elevated structure on Main Street. This proposal corresponds to preliminary proposals of the North Terminal Study consultants. With the development proposed at the west of Town Hill, a surface line south of Rutherford Avenue would still provide rapid transit service to Charlestown residents. With this alignment, a station can be located to provide convenient service to the community as well as providing important Navy Yard and bus transfer service.

City Square is proposed to be insulated insofar as possible from the regional highway network through new ramps at another location. While the potential for development at this key intersection of the Inner Belt and the Central Artery is extremely strong, far too many values of an historic and residential character are present in association with Harvard Mall. While its commercial character has limited value, residential streets off City Square are come of the loveliest in Charlestown and provide significant symbols of strength for rehabilitation activities for the rest of the community.

Sullivan Square is a crossroads which has never full realized its potential in terms of surrounding land development. Certain efficiencies are evident in its separation of traffic but as an area suggestive of large numbers of people utilizing it daily, it shows little vigor. The plan proposes that the marginal character of the area be exploited more to the advantage of the community by providing new residential development at the north western side of Bunker Hill facing Sullivan Square oriented to eliminate the impeding influences of confusing the heavy traffic flows or haphazard commercial development. Such residential development is further clarified by stopping Main Street before it reaches Sullivan Square and directing it toward Medford Street in the vicinity of Auburn Street.

A final proposal deals with the development of the Little Mystic Channel for recreation purposes. To accomplish this it is proposed that Medford Street be relocated along roughly the line of Terminal Street along the Mystic Pier at the northern bank of the Little Mystic Channel and to tie back to Chelsea Street with a reconstructed bridge.

Internal residential plan proposals are primarily oriented to a clarification of the pattern of public lands and community focal points in the area to more fully accentuate the unique land form and to provide ties between major plan elements. There is thus a connecting pattern between the new gateway area at the terminal of Prison Point Bridge and the new recreation area at the Little Mystic Channel. A perpendicular axis running the length of Charlestown would be Bunker Hill Street serving as a neighborhood collector street with both local public and shopping facilities. Further connecting patterns between major historical sites complete the overall scheme.

The plan proposes that this pattern of public lands and focal points in Charlestown be a subtle factor. No large scale elements are involved with the exception of certain anchor points. It is intended to weave through and enhance the existing residential pattern by providing elements which join the community together but at the same time to be a part of the intense urban fabric which is an important element of Charlestown's character.

This plan would have the following rough breakdown:

1. Roughly 82% of the occupied dwelling units would be rehabilitated.

2. 18% of the occupied dwelling units would be cleared.

3. This would mean approximately 100 acres of redevelopment in 1200 new dwelling units of low cost housing.

4. Approximately 5700 dwelling units would be rehabilitated in an area of roughly 335 acres.

The net project costs for the area now included in this plan is estimated to be $17,413,391. This gives a Federal Grant Requirement (2/3 of Net) of $11,608,928.

By subtracting out the costs of Little Mystic, net costs are estimated to be $14,935,991 and Federal Grant Requirements $9,957,328. The Little Mystic area was not included in the Survey and Planning Application submitted however, it is a necessary part of this draft plan for Charlestown.

Supporting facilities and site improvements included in the above costs include: two new elementary schools and playgrounds; a swimming pool and skating rink; a new or rebuilt library; two new fire stations; the improvement of Rutherford, Medford, and Chelsea Streets; and allowance for the improvement of local streets, street lights, utilities, and playgrounds; the development of a stadium and playfields along the Little Mystic; and a new bridge over the Little Mystic.

These cost figures do not include a high school which might be a desirable addition.

In essence we are proposing the preparation of a first project that will have major emphasis placed upon housing and community facilities. The preparation of this plan and the tooling up for its execution will take a very thorough planning and engineering job. We must be sure of what we are doing in rehabilitation, new construction, and relocation. Market studies, engineering studies, careful relocation planning, and staging, tied together with excellent design of public facilities can make Charlestown one of the finest examples of rehabilitation and renewal in the country. Our budget request in our Survey and Planning Application that is now in Washington can be stretched to do this job.

In summary we are preposing a first project for the entire residential area of Charlestown for the following reasons:

1. Satisfactory solutions of the regional transportation problems cannot be arrived at unless the abutting community is planned and developed to contain them.

The geographic location of the Charlestown GNRP focused immediate attention on the regional flow of traffic in and around the Charlestown area. The seriousness of these transportation questions called for a bold solution. The important facts were as follows:

Roughly 200,000 plus automobile trips per day must find their way through or around the Charlestown GNRP.

The provision of space for the location of new transportation facilities to carry the projected traffic load had to be made on a coordinated basis that would recognize the needs of the city of Cambridge, the city of Sommerville, the Massachusetts Port Authority, the M.T.A., the Boston and Maine Railway, the MDC, and the residential community in Charlestown.

2. The Charlestown residential community is compact and interrelated to such an extent that it must be rehabilitated as a unit.

3. The problems of providing the necessary new housing stock and the supporting community facilities for a compact community with a minimum of hardship for its residents demands that it be done in a single project.

4. Charlestown is isolated from the rest of Boston and this community needs comprehensive treatment if it is to survive.

This project is slightly larger than the first project as conceived in our submitted survey and Planning Application now in Washington. This expanded first project can be planned with $396,000 requested in our Survey and Planning Application, however, a larger capital grant reservation will be needed for its execution.

We have taken the draft GNRP Plan and the outlined sketch first project to the community through its delegated leadership. This community has formed a federation of 74 organizations that presently exist in Charlestown to work with our staff to accomplish Charlestown's first project. They recognize that their community needs help and the spirit of cooperation and community pride in an asset which will go a long way in making this renewal effort a success. I have attached a map showing the GNRP boundering the Survey and Planning boundaries as submitted in our Survey and Planning Application and the area which is needed as an addition. I have also included a photo of the sketch first project as it has been shown to the community.

SURVEY AND PLANNING BOUNDARY

GNRP BOUNDARY

PROPOSED ADDITION TO FIRST PROJECT

# CHARLESTOWN

CHARLESTOWN
# PATRIOT
and Somerville Chronicle

Vol.4 No. 7 Charlestown, Massachusetts 5¢ February 15, 1962

ievelo
Annex
Boston, Mass.

# 54 Local Organizations Form New Federation To Air Renewal Plans

Charlestown moved directly into the Urban Renewal field as delegates and alternates of 54 local organizations unanimously voted to create a federation of organizations to bring the people into the planning process.

Robert L. Lee, 44 Winthrop St., resident of long standing and vice-president of John Hancock Life Insurance Co., was elected to the temporary chairmanship of the Federation. "The prospects for the future of Charlestown are bright and I will do all in my power to help us succeed in this vital and serious effort. Maturity, responsibility and unity are the symbols of this movement, and I will follow your lead in this endeavor", commented Lee.

The Executive Committee of the Federation met recently with the Boston Redevelopment Authority to preview the sketch plans for Charlestown and set up immediately a series of meetings so that the delegates and their organizations can become familiar with the planning prospects.

In a tone of caution, Lee stated, "It must be remembered that these plans are just sketches and that by working together we should be able to develop a plan that will serve the common good."

The new federation is intended to deal with urban renewal from

(Continued on page 8)

BOSTON PUBLIC LIBRARY
3 9999 06550 961 2

# Federation Studies Renewal

(Continued from page 1)

both the physical and social aspects While being a temporary organization James W. Conway, Secretary, added, "We are now in the process of developing a constitution and general program. It is our hope that within two months we should have another delegates' meeting at which time we will vote on a constitution, policy and elect permanent officers."

Other officers elected include James W. Conway, Secretary, representing the Bunker Hill Council, Knights of Columbus, and John Crowley, Treasurer, representing the St. Vincent De Paul Society of St. Mary's.

To guide in the creation of the permanent Charlestown Federation an Executive Committee was elected. The members include Edward "Chris" Callahan of the International Longshoreman's Ass'n, Sheriff Frederick Sullivan of The Boy's Clubs of Boston, Miss Mary McNeely of the St. Francis de Sales Ladies Sodality, Leo T. Baldwin of S.H.O.C., Michael Mullan of the Frank Danahy Ass'n, and Eugene J. Hennessy of the Boosters.

## 2 COMMITTEES UNDERWAY

The Executive Committee appointed a Constitution and a Program committee to develop ideas on structure and community program. The recommendation of the committees will be presented in advance to member organizations and will be voted upon at the general meeting.

Ralph Smith, attorney and president of the Charlestown Historical Society, was appointed chairman of the Constitution committee. Other members include Daniel Kane, Vice Chairman, St. Vincent De Paul of St. Mary, Mary Colbert, Secretary, Charlestown Community Council, Rev. Gerard Shea, St Catherine's Church, Rev. William Burnett, 1st Church of Charlestown, Michael Walsh, Bunker Hill Council #62, Knights of Columbus, Patrick F. Sullivan, Bunker Hill Post, American Legion, Anne Hartigan, Charlestown Neighborhood Club, Ted Chin, St. John's Epsicopal Church, Joseph Rinaldi, Albert Athletic Club, Roland F. Adams, Y.M.C.A., James Sweeney, Thompson Square Association, Joseph Murphy, Lion's Club, Margaret Murphy, Friends of Library, Helen Gillette, Girl Scouts, Agnes Hickey, Daughters of Isabella, Edna Greeley, American Legion Auxiliary, Leo Ducey, St. Vincent de Paul of St. Francis.

Miss Mary McNelly, St. Francis Ladies Sodality, was appointed Chairman of the Program Committee. Other members include: John Grace, Vice-Chairman, St. Catherine s Council of Catholic Men, Agnes Kelley, Secretary, Bunker Hill Boy's Mother's Club, Louis H. Zeramby, Boy's Clubs of Boston, Charles Morgan, Kiwanis, Judith Birmingham, Visiting Nurses Association, Kay Whalen, Boosters, Ted Nichols, Woods Club, Mary Sweeney, Girl's Clubs of Boston, Catherine Sullivan, St. Patrick's Guild, Mrs. Brian Kelley, Women's Friendly Soc. of St. John's, Mrs. Mildred Hill, First Church of Charlestown, Julia McHugh, Warren Home and School Association, Joseph Barnes, Charlestown Little League, Jeremiah Murphy, St. Vincent De Paul of St. Mary, James Collins, St. Mary Holy Name Society.

To help with the immediate expenses of the organization contributions were volunteered by the Bunker Hill Council, Knights of Columbus and the International Longshoreman's Association.

THREE OFFICERS of the temporary Federation of Charlestown Organizations join hands as a symbol of unity in the effort to guide the town through a successful redevelopment program. (L to R) James W. Conway, Secretary; Robert L. Lee, Chairman; and John J. Crowley, Treasurer. (Bob Gray's Photo Service)

## 74 GROUPS TO PARTICIPATE

Among the 74 organizations invited to participate in the creation of the federation were: Bunker Hill Council #62, Alert Athletic Club, St. Mary's Catholic Church, Bunker Hill, Post #26, American Legion, First Church in Charlestown, the Boosters, Bunker Hill, Post #26, American Legion Auxiliary, St. Francis de Sales Church, Self Help Organization Charlestown, Boy's Clubs of Boston, Inc., Saint John's Church, St. Francis de Sales Legion of Mary, Bunker Hill Boy's Mother's Club, Young People's Fellowship of St. John's Church, Charlestown Unit #71, Auxiliary, Catholic Daughters of America, Catholic Youth Organization, Charlestown Armed Services Y.M.C.A., St. Mary's Parish Council, Charlestown Boston College Alumni, St. Francis de Sales St. Vincent de Paul Society, Charlestown Cardinals, St. Catherine's St. Vincent de Paul Society, Charlestown Community Council, St. Francis de Sales Holy Name Society, Charlestown High School-Home and School Ass'n., Charlestown Historical Society, the Church School of St. John's Church, Charlestown Little League, Charlestown Neighborhood Club, Women's Friendly Society of St. John's Church, Charlestown World War I Barracks, St Catherine's Ladies Sodality, Charlestown World War I Barracks, Auxiliary, Frank Dannahy Association, Daughters of Isabella, David Cleary Chapter #109 Disabled American Veterans, St Catherine's Catholic Church, David Cleary Unit #109, Auxiliary, St. Mary's Legion of Mary, Disabled American Veterans, Clarence R. Edwards School, Home and School Association, St. Mary's Holy Name Society, Religious Education Church School of the First Church in Charlestown, Friendly Circle of the First Church in Charlestown, St. Mary's Ladies Sodality, First Baptist Church of Charlestown, Couple's Club of the First Baptist Church, Girl's Clubs of Boston, Sunday School of the First Baptist Church, Willing Workers of the First Baptist Church, Friends of the Library, Young People's Fellowship of the First Baptist Church, International Longshoremen's Ass'n., Women's Guild of the First Church in Charlestown, The Kiwanis, St. Catherine's Council of Catholic Men, The Squires, St. Catherine's Legion of Mary, Lions Club, St. Catherine's Tabernacle Society, Norumbega Women's Club, St. Patrick's Guild, Teamsters Union Local #25, St. Mary's St. Vincent de Paul, Society, Thirty-Thirty Club, St. Catherine's Holy Name Society, William Fields, VFW, #544, St. Francis de Sales Ladies Sodality, Visiting Nurses Association of Boston, St. Mary's Women's Club, Warren Home and School Ass'n, The Woods Club, Inc.

Because of possible oversight any organization not listed above should contact James W. Conway 7 Mt. Vernon St., CH 2-4